

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-18. (Cancelled).

19. (New) A method for producing a plurality of medical test implements, comprising the steps of:

folding first and second portions of a handle-forming material toward one another;
separating the first and second portions of the handle-forming material;
positioning a plurality of test elements, each having a predetermined length, between the first and portions of the handle-forming material such that each test element is spaced apart from one another by a predetermined distance;
mechanically mating the first and second portions of the handle-forming material to one another with the plurality of test elements disposed therebetween; and
perforating, scoring, or cutting the first and second portions of the handle-forming material to form a plurality of medical test implements, each having a handle and a test element that is adapted to deform when a predetermined load is applied thereto.

20. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the handle-forming material is scored to form the first and second portions prior to folding the first and second portions.

21. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the plurality of test elements are formed from an elongate test element that is cut into predetermined lengths.

22. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the elongate test element is heated to a predetermined temperature for a predetermined time before the elongate test element is cut to form the plurality of test elements.

23. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the predetermined temperature and predetermined time are selected to allow for elimination of substantially all curvature of the elongate test element during the elongate test element.

24. (New) The method of claim 23, wherein the predetermined temperature is in the range of about 250°F and 350°F.
25. (New) The method of claim 23, wherein the predetermined time is in the range of about 20 seconds and 40 seconds.
26. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the predetermined length of each test element is in the range of about 37 millimeters to 39 millimeters.
27. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein each test element has a diameter in the range of about 0.4 millimeters to 0.5 millimeters.
28. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the handle on each medical test implement has a width in the range of about 20 millimeters and 30 millimeters.
29. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the handle on each medical test implement has a length in the range of about 40 millimeters and 50 millimeters.
30. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the handle-forming member is formed from a material selected from the group consisting of cardboard, paperboard, a composite material and a plastic material.
31. (New) The method of claim 30, wherein the plastic material is selected from the group consisting of polyethylene, polypropylene, nylon, and combinations thereof.
32. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the plurality of testing implements are each formed from a plastic material.
33. (New) The method of claim 32, wherein the plastic material is nylon.

34. (Original) The method of claim 19, wherein the test element deforms when a load of approximately 10 grams is applied axially thereto.
35. (New) The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of verifying whether the deformable test element deforms in response to the application of a predetermined load thereto.
36. (New) The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of coating at least a portion of the handle-forming member with an adhesive prior to the step of mechanically mating the first and second portions to one another.
37. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the step of mechanically mating the first and second portions to one another comprises heating the first and second portions.
38. (New) The method of claim 37, wherein the first and second portions are heated using a heat/seal press heated to a predetermined temperature for a predetermined time and a precise amount of pressure that facilitates sealing of the first and second portions of the material.
39. (New) The method of claim 37, wherein the handle-forming member has been pre-treated with a thermosensitive adhesive that is activated by the step of heating the first and second portions.
40. (New) A method for manufacturing a plurality of medical test implements, comprising:
positioning a plurality of test elements, each having a predetermined length, between first and second handle-forming sheets, such that each test element is spaced apart from one another by a predetermined distance;
mechanically bonding the first and second handle-forming sheets to one another with the plurality of test elements disposed therebetween; and
cutting the bonded first and second handle-forming sheets with the test elements disposed therebetween to form a plurality of medical test implements, each including a handle and a test element.

41. (New) A method for manufacturing a plurality of medical test implements, comprising:
- feeding an elongate sheet of a handle-forming material through a machine that is effective to fold and separate the sheet lengthwise into first and second portions;
 - passing the first and second portions through a test element placement machine that is effective to deposit a plurality of test elements, each having a predetermined length, between the first and portions of the handle-forming material such that each test element is spaced apart from one another by a predetermined distance;
 - mechanically mating the first and second portions of the handle-forming material to one another with the plurality of test elements disposed therebetween; and
 - forming a plurality of medical test implements, each having a handle and a test element, by perforating, scoring, or cutting the first and second portions of the handle-forming material.
42. (New) The method of claim 41, wherein the machine is effective to score the elongate sheet of handle-forming material to form first and second portions prior to folding and separating the sheet into first and second portions.